

WHOLE LIFE INSURANCE

by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner

This weeks parsha, Trumah, deals with the intricacies of constructing the Mishkan and its vessels. The Mishkan is, in a way, a microcosm of the world we live in. Its purpose was to be the place where the Shechinah, the Heavenly Presence, would dwell. There, one felt, very clearly, the sanctity of Hashem's presence. Our task is to make this world a place where, like the Mishkan, the Shechinah will dwell and its presence will be felt. From understanding the Mishkan we can gain a clearer understanding of the world and ultimately of ourselves...

In describing the process of collecting the necessary materials for the construction, the pasuk (25:2) seems to word it in a rather strange way. "Speak to Bnei Yisroel (and have them) take for me an offering." Don't we give, not take, offerings?!

I recall a story I had seen many years ago which made a very strong impression on me. The book, "All For the Boss", tells the story of Rav Yaakov Yosef Herman zt"l's life. He had a fur business which took a very serious turn for the worse around the years of the depression. When it seemed that he'd be losing all of his money, he quickly began writing \$100 checks (then worth today's equivalent of about \$1000) to tzedakah! His thinking was that this was the only way that he could ensure that the money would stay 'his'!

The Beis HaLevi writes that one truly acquires, in an eternal sense, only that which he gives away for charity. Don't give an offering for the Mishkan... take an offering!

The gemara in Bava Basra tells of King Munbaz. During a drought year he emptied his storehouses of the wealth that had been amassed there, and distributed it to tzedakah. "My predecessors stored away for others, I have stored for myself!"

All of our worldly possessions are so transient. We think we have what we really don't. What we do have, we don't know for how long. As the Chovos HaLevovos writes in his poignant fashion, a man can spend his whole life amassing a fortune for his wife to enjoy with her second husband. Make an investment with the most incredible returns. **Take** an offering for the Mishkan, 'Whole Life Insurance' that only the Torah can offer!

When thinking about the Mishkan or about the Beis HaMikdash, we think about that closeness that those present must have felt to Hashem. It seems so long ago in such a different world. How can we in the 90's access even a taste of that sensation?

We are instructed to place the Kaporas on top of the Aron, the Holy Ark. The Kaporas was a sheet of gold with two cherubim, angelic figures, standing on either side, lovingly extending their wings toward each other. The Beis HaLevi quotes the Zohar who explains that these cherubim symbolize Hashem and Bnei Yisroel. The wings stretching out symbolize that love and intimacy which exists between us.

The location of the kapores must indicate the basis of that intimacy. Those cherubim were situated on top of the Aron, on top of the Luchos, on top of the Torah. It is only through our involvement in Torah study that we can feel that relationship.

So many people bemoan the sense of detachment they feel once their year in Israel has ended. "It just doesn't feel the same way it used to." "Things don't mean as much to me as they did then." Clearly, Eretz Yisroel is a place where that connection can more easily be felt. However, just as the Shechinah has never left the Kotel HaMaaravi, so too the Shechinah has never left the 'daled amos of halacha', the area of Torah study. Through our involvement, we can access those feelings of Eretz Yisroel which are an intimation of those feelings of the Mishkan. We too can experience the feeling of the cherubim lovingly reaching out for one another.

"Make for me a Mishkan veshachanti besochom - and I will dwell in their midst". (25:8) It doesn't say that Hashem will dwell in its midst. I will dwell in your midst! I will dwell in you! We must strive to make ourselves into the type of people that the Shechinah will want to dwell in us. The creation of the world is often referred to as a transition of 'yesh ma'ayin', something from nothingness. Rav Dessler quotes the Baal HaTanya that this is really an inaccurate perspective. Before creation, Hashem's presence filled everywhere. In order to create an environment of free will for us, His presence needed to be 'moved aside', creating the illusion of a spiritual vacuum, a place devoid of Hashem's presence. Something was not created from nothingness... ayin was created from yesh! Nothingness, a vacuum, was created from something! The epitome of reality was 'removed'.

Our purpose in life is to bring back the yesh, the reality, the substance. Through our actions, our words, our thoughts, our relationships, our Torah, we fill this seemingly spiritual vacuum with Hashem's presence. We accomplish the objective of the Mishkan. Veshachanti besochom. Hashem's presence dwells in us.

When Shlomo HaMelech built the Beis HaMikdash, the windows were most unusual. Normally, a window will be narrow on the outside and wide on the inside, allowing the light to diffuse and cause the greatest degree of illumination. In the case of the Beis HaMikdash the opposite was true. They were narrow on the inside and wide on the outside (Kings I 6:4). The Beis HaMikdash doesn't need the light of the outside world. The world needs the light of the Beis HaMikdash.

If that was the case then, our present world bears stark testimony that is even more so today. We don't need their light. They, and we, so desperately need our own.

May we merit to develop or redevelop that intimate connection with Hashem, filling ourselves with

His Torah, becoming an abode for His presence and diffusing His light to all those lives that we merit to touch.

Good shabbos.

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